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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9264
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
WHITEHOUSE WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JERUSALEM 003642

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SUBJECT: PALESTINIANS EXPRESS SHOCK, ANXIETY ABOUT THE
FUTURE, AFTER RABIN ASSASSINATION

¶1. CLASSIFIED BY EDWARD G. ABINGTON, CONSUL GENERAL.
1.5B-D. THIS IS A JOINT CONGEN JERUSALEM, EMBASSY TEL
AVIV CABLE.

¶2. SUMMARY. PALESTINIANS HAVE REACTED WITH SHOCK TO
THE NOVEMBER 4 ASSASSINATION OF ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER
YITZHAK RABIN, FOLLOWED BY ANXIETY ABOUT WHAT HIS DEATH
MEANS TO THE PEACE PROCESS AND THEIR FUTURE. WEST BANK
AND GAZA ARE UNDER CLOSURE FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD, AND
TOWNS WERE QUIET. YASIR ARAFAT AND OTHER PA OFFICIALS
HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR SHOCK AND SADNESS REGARDING RABIN'S
DEATH, AND VOW THAT THE PEACE PROCESS WILL NOT BE
DISRUPTED AS A RESULT. MAMAS AND PIJ "CELEBRATIONS"
HAVE BEEN FIRMLY PROHIBITED; PALESTINIAN SECURITY CHIEFS
DO NOT EXPECT THAT ISLAMISTS WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE
CRISIS TO CARRY OUT OPERATIONS. PPF DEPLOYMENT INTO
JENIN HAS BEEN DELAYED, PROBABLY ONLY FOR A FEW DAYS.
END SUMMARY.

WEST BANK/GAZA QUIET AS PALESTINIANS ABSORB THE NEWS

¶3. THE WEST BANK AND GAZA WAS ABNORMALLY QUIET THE DAY
AFTER RABIN'S ASSASSINATION, WITH MOST PALESTINIANS
APPEARING TO BE IN SHOCK ABOUT THE NEWS OF HIS MURDER
AND ANXIOUS ABOUT THE IMPACT IT WILL HAVE ON THE PEACE
PROCESS AND THEIR FUTURE. THE GOI IMPOSED A COMPLETE
CLOSURE ON THE TERRITORIES--FOR AN INDEFINITE
PERIOD--THAT ENSURED THAT MANY PALESTINIANS REMAINED IN
THEIR HOMES, GLUED TO THEIR TELEVISIONS AND RADIOS
LISTENING TO NEWS REPORTS. MANY WERE UP LATE THE NIGHT
OF THE KILLING, UNABLE TO SLEEP, AND THOSE AT BUSINESSES
AND COFFEE SHOPS NOVEMBER 5 SPENT THE DAY DISCUSSING THE
EVENT AND ITS EXPECTED IMPACT.

¶4. GAZA CIVIL POLICE CHIEF GHAZI JABALI SAID PA POLICE
WERE NOT ALLOWING PALESTINIANS TO EXPRESS JOY AT THE
KILLING OF RABIN, BUT ADDED THAT SO FAR NO CELEBRATIONS
BROKE OUT, AND ONE THAT THREATENED TO OCCUR AT KHAN
YUNIS WAS SQUASHED BY PA POLICE. ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM
ARAFAT, JERICHO PREVENTIVE SECURITY CHIEF JIBRIL RAJOUB
MET WITH WEST BANK MAMAS LEADERS IN THE EARLY MORNING
HOURS OF NOVEMBER 5 TO CONVEY ARAFAT'S WARNING THAT
THERE WERE TO BE NO DISRESPECTFUL DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE
STREETS. RAJOUB SAID THAT MAMAS WAS TO CONVEY THE SAME
MESSAGE TO THE PIJ. BOTH RAJOUB AND WEST BANK PPF
COMMANDER HAJ ISMAIL JABBER BELIEVED THE WEST BANK WOULD
REMAIN QUIET, BUT THE POTENTIAL FOR INSTABILITY DEPENDED
ON DEVELOPMENTS IN ISRAEL IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS AHEAD.

¶5. BETHLEHEM MAYOR ILYAS FREIJ WAS "TERRIBLY UPSET,"
SAYING HE KNEW RABIN AS A FRIEND. HE COMMENTED ON WHAT
COULD BE A "DISTURBING PHENOMENA IF EVERY LEADER WHO
TRIES TO MAKE PEACE IN THE REGION IS THREATENED WITH
GUNS." JENIN MAYOR WALID ABU MUWAYZ SAID JENIN
RESIDENTS ARE SADDENED BY THE KILLING AND HOPE IT WILL
NOT AFFECT THE SCHEDULE FOR REDEPLOYMENT IN THEIR TOWN.
NABLUS MAYOR GHASSAN SHAKA SAID IT WAS A SAD DAY FOR
NABLUS, AND HE HOPES RABIN'S DEATH WILL NOT HAVE A
CATASTROPHIC EFFECT ON THE PEACE PROCESS. FATAH
SUPPORTER AZZAM AL-ARAJ IN TULKAREM SAID THE PEOPLE
THERE ARE SHOCKED AND SADDENED, EVEN THE YOUNG ACTIVISTS
AT AN-NAJAH UNIVERSITY WHERE HE TEACHES.

ARAFAT, PA OFFICIALS SHAKEN, SADDENED BY THE NEWS

¶6. PA OFFICIALS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THEIR SADNESS AND SHOCK TOWARDS THE ATTACK AND SENT CONDOLENCES TO THE ISRAELI PEOPLE, AND FLAGS AT PA BUILDINGS WERE AT HALF MAST. YASIR ARAFAT, LOOKING VISIBLY SHAKEN AND SPEAKING HALTINGLY AND QUIETLY, SAID PUBLICLY NOVEMBER 4 THAT HE WAS "VERY SAD AND VERY SHOCKED BY THIS TERRIBLE CRIME, AGAINST A GREAT ISRAELI LEADER AND AN ARCHITECT OF PEACE. IN THE NAME OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, I SEND MY CONDOLENCES TO MRS. RABIN, HER FAMILY, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AND THE ENTIRE ISRAELI PEOPLE. I HOPE WE WILL SUCCEED IN OVERCOMING THIS TRAGEDY, WHICH IS A BLOW TO THE PEACE PROCESS." ARAFAT'S JERICHO OFFICE DIRECTOR SAMI MUSALLAM SAID ARAFAT WAS VERY UPSET BY THE ASSASSINATION, AND HAD NOT SEEN HIM IN SUCH A STATE SINCE THE ASSASSINATIONS OF ABU JIHAD AND ABU IYAD. OTHER PA OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MILITARY LEADERS, WERE ALSO UPSET, SAYING THE REGION HAD LOST A GREAT MAN OF PEACE AND CALLING THE KILLING A DISASTER AND A CATASTROPHE. MANY OF THE PALESTINIAN POLITICAL, SECURITY, AND ECONOMIC FIGURES VOICED A SENSE OF RELIEF THAT THE ASSASSIN WAS NOT PALESTINIAN.

WORRIES ABOUT THE FUTURE, IMPACT ON THE PEACE PROCESS

¶7. ALL PALESTINIANS EXPRESSED ANXIETY ABOUT THE EFFECT OF THE KILLING ON THE PEACE PROCESS. PA MINISTER OF LOCAL AFFAIRS SA'EB ERAKAT SAID "WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT, BUT OBVIOUSLY THIS COULD AFFECT IMPLEMENTATION." HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE PHENOMENON OF THE ISRAELI RIGHT WING'S VIOLENCE IN OPPOSING THE PEACE PROCESS AND WONDERED HOW THAT WILL EFFECT CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES AND WHAT SUCH EXTREMISTS HAVE IN STORE FOR PALESTINIANS DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT AND ELECTIONS. HE SAID PALESTINIANS CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD ON PREPARATIONS FOR PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS. (NOTE: THE PA CABINET YESTERDAY CONFIRMED THE JANUARY 20 ELECTION DATE.)

¶8. HEBRON UNIVERSITY PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR NABIL ABU ZNEID EXPRESSED THE CONCERN OF MANY PALESTINIANS WHEN HE SAID THE VOID LEFT BY RABIN MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE TO FILL. HE FELT THE CURRENT PEACE PROCESS WAS LESS A PEACE BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS BUT MORE A PEACE BETWEEN ARAFAT AND RABIN. OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO HAD GRADUALLY GROWN STRONGER AND MORE TRUSTING, AND THE TWO HAVE MADE BRAVE DECISIONS FOR PEACE. HE SAID "WE'VE LOST A GREAT MAN," AND LAMENTED THAT THERE IS NO OTHER ISRAELI LEADER AT THIS TIME WITH RABIN'S PRO-PEACE ATTITUDE COUPLED WITH MILITARY EXPERTISE AND KNOW-HOW.

¶9. WEST BANK FATAH AND BUSINESS LEADERS WERE ALSO SHOCKED AND PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE WITHOUT RABIN. HIGHER COUNCIL MEMBER AHMAD AD-DEEK AND RAMALLAH LEADER HUSSEIN ASH-SHEIKH ARE AFRAID HIS DEATH MARKS THE END OF THE PEACE PROCESS. THEY FEAR THE PROCESS WILL BE SUSPENDED UNTIL THE NEXT ISRAELI ELECTION. PADICO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AMIN HADDAD SAID "WE ALL BELIEVE THIS IS A HUGE LOSS TO THE PEACE PROCESS; NO PALESTINIAN WHO IS THOUGHTFUL IS REJOICING." CAIRO AMMAN BANK REGIONAL MANAGER YUSUF BAZIAN SAID "ISRAELIS MAY HESITATE EVEN MORE ABOUT TAKING DIFFICULT STEPS THAT THEY MUST TAKE; MOREOVER, THEY MAY WONDER IF PEACE IS WORTH THE PRICE."

¶10. MANY PALESTINIANS ALSO WORRIED ABOUT THE INTERNAL SITUATION INSIDE ISRAEL, AND WERE INCREDULOUS THAT THE KILLING HAS PERPETRATED BY AN ISRAELI. HADDAD SAID THE ASSASSINATION INDICATES THAT "ISRAEL HAS TRULY JOINED THE MIDDLE EAST." ANIS AL-QAQ, DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, WONDERED IF ISRAEL WOULD COME TOGETHER OR FRACTURE FURTHER OVER THE LOSS OF RABIN.

"MANY OF US WHO KNOW ISRAEL BELIEVE THE PRIDE OF ISRAELI DEMOCRACY AND SENSE OF MORAL CERTAINTY WAS ALSO SHOT YESTERDAY."

¶11. MANY FEAR PERES IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD ISRAEL OR THE PEACE PROCESS TOGETHER. SAMI MUSALLAM, DIRECTOR OF ARAFAT'S OFFICE IN JERICHO, SAID THAT ALTHOUGH PERES ENJOYS SUPPORT AMONG YOUNGER IDF OFFICERS, HE DOES NOT HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ANY OF THE CURRENT CLASS OF REGIONAL AND FORCE COMMANDERS. THE PALESTINIANS ARE EXTREMELY WORRIED THAT PERES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BRING THE MILITARY TO HEEL DURING REDEPLOYMENT, IN THE WAY RABIN HAD DONE. THEY ARE WATCHING CLOSELY TO SEE WHO WILL BE NAMED MINISTER OF DEFENSE IN RABIN'S STEAD. MUSALLAM SAID THAT AMNON SHAHAK WOULD BE FAR PREFERABLE TO EHUD BARAK, IN TERMS OF EACH MAN'S SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE PROCESS. PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATOR HASSAN ASFOUR, HOWEVER, SAID THAT DURING THE NOVEMBER 4 PA CABINET MEETING, THE CABINET WISHED FOR AN ISRAELI LEADERSHIP "DREAM TEAM" MADE UP OF PERES AS PRIME MINISTER, EHUD BARAK AS DEFENSE MINISTER, AND HAIM RAMON AS FOREIGN MINISTER. MANY PALESTINIANS FEAR THAT NETANYAHU WILL HAVE AN EASY TIME DEFEATING PERES IN FUTURE ELECTIONS.

PALESTINIANS HOPE GOI WILL COCK DOWN ON ITS EXTREMISTS

¶12. A COMMON REACTION AMONG PALESTINIANS WAS THAT RABIN'S MURDER WOULD HURT THE FAR-RIGHT OPPONENTS OF PEACE. PALESTINE BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATION LEADER HANI ABU DAYYEH SAID THE KILLING WOULD DISCREDIT THE FAR-RIGHT AND GIVE THE GOI THE CHANCE TO ACT AGAINST ISRAELI EXTREMISTS THAT "HAS MISSED AFTER THE HEBRON MASSACRE." AL-QAQ COMMENTED THAT "ISRAEL HAS OVERLOOKED A TREND TOWARD VIOLENT FORCES ALLOWED TO OPERATE WITHIN ITS SOCIETY--THIS CAN NO LONGER BE IGNORED. THIS IS THE MOST PAINFUL PRICE ISRAEL CAN PAY FOR ALLOWING PARTS OF THE SOCIETY TO ACT AS IF THEY WERE ABOVE THE LAW."

¶13. PPF POLICE CHIEF NASIR YUSIF SAID THE ASSASSINATION HAS A "CATASTROPHE" THAT WILL "NO DOUBT IMPOSE ON ALL THE NEED TO CONFRONT WITH ALL FIRMNESS EXTREMISM IN THE REGION." GAZA PREVENTIVE SECURITY CHIEF MUHAMMAD DAHLAN SAID IT "SHOULD BE A LESSON FOR THE ISRAELIS TO SEE THE DANGER IN THEIR OWN EXTREMISTS." FORMER PEACE TERMER NABIL KASSIS SAID IN ORDER TO LESSEN THE INFLUENCE OF THE EXTREMISTS, THE GOI IN GENERAL MUST WORK HARDER TO EDUCATE ITS PEOPLE ABOUT PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE WITH PALESTINIANS OTHER THAN VIEWING THEM ONLY AS A SECURITY THREAT. WHILE BETHLEHEM MAYOR FREIJ HOPES THE ASSASSINATION WILL UNDERCUT THE CREDIBILITY OF THE ISRAELI EXTREMISTS, HE WORRIES THAT IT MAY INSTEAD MAKE THEM MORE AGGRESSIVE.

MAMAS, PIJ RELATIVELY QUIET, FOR NOW

¶14. MAMAS AND PIJ SUPPORTERS WERE GENERALLY QUIET, WITH PA SECURITY OFFICERS AND FATAH MEMBERS THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK AND GAZA ENSURING THAT CELEBRATIONS WOULD NOT OCCUR. TEL AVIV POLOFF SAW NO INDICATION OF EXTREMIST CELEBRATIONS IN GAZA. SALAH SAKKA, A GAZA CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, SAID THAT THE MOOD LAST NIGHT IN KHAN YUNIS AMONG ISLAMISTS WAS HAPPY, BUT THERE WERE NO PUBLIC RALLIES, JUST BULLETS SHOT INTO THE AIR. PA POLICE PRESENCE IN KHAN YUNIS HAS VERY HIGH. PLO CHAIRMAN ARAFAT TOLD THE CG THAT STRICT ORDERS HAD GONE OUT TO PREVENT CELEBRATIONS, INCLUDING FIRING IN THE AIR.

¶15. IN HEBRON, SOME ISLAMIC SUPPORTERS FELT RABIN'S KILLING HAS AN EVENT WORTH CELEBRATING--SEEING IT AS AN END TO THE PEACE PROCESS--BUT DID NOT YET ACT ON THAT IMPULSE. HEBRON LEADERS SAID THE CITY WAS COWLING WITH IDF SOLDIERS. PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS WERE ALSO HOPING RABIN'S MURDER WILL LEAD TO MORE DIVISIONS IN ISRAELI

SOCIETY. HAMAS FOLLOWERS IN TULKAREM REPORTEDLY CONSIDERED THE ASSASSINATION THE "ACT OF A COWARD." KHALIL SHIQAQI, RESEARCH DIRECTOR AT THE CENTER FOR PALESTINE RESEARCH AND STUDIES IN NABLUS AND BROTHER OF RECENTLY ASSASSINATED PALESTINE ISLAMIC JIHAD LEADER FATHI SHIQAQI, SAID THAT SOME OF THE RADICAL PALESTINIAN FACTIONS ARE SAYING THAT RABIN'S ASSASSINATION WAS "AN ACT OF GOD," IMPLYING THAT THEY WILL NOT HAVE TO AVENGE SHIQAQI'S DEATH.

DELAYS EXPECTED, BUT PEACE PROCESS MUST CONTINUE

¶16. MANY PALESTINIANS UNDERSTAND SOME DELAYS ARE TO BE EXPECTED IN THE PEACE PROCESS AS A RESULT OF ROBIN'S DEATH, BUT HOPE PRESIDENT CLINTON AND OTHER LEADERS WILL STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAVELY GOING FORWARD AT RABIN'S FUNERAL. CAB REGIONAL MANAGER BAZIAN SAID PALESTINIANS MUST BE SMART AND "UNDERSTAND THE THE ISRAELIS WILL NEED TIME TO SORT THIS OUT. WE SHOULD GIVE THEM THIS TIME, BUT INSIST ON OUR RIGHTS UNDER THE AGREEMENT." WEST BANK PPF COMMANDER HAJJ ISMAIL REPORTED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN WITH IDF CENTRAL COMMAND MG ILAN BIRAN EARLIER IN THE DAY NOVEMBER 5 TO CONVEY HIS CONDOLENCES AND DISCUSS THE EFFECT OF THE ASSASSINATION ON PLANS FOR REDEPLOYMENT. ANOTHER PPF CONTINGENT HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO DEPART JERICHO FOR JENIN NOVEMBER 5; HAJ ISMAIL AGREED TO BIRAN'S REQUEST THAT ANY MOVEMENT ON REDEPLOYMENT BE POSTPONED FOR "A FEW DAYS." HAJ ISMAIL DID NOT EXPECT THAT THE REDEPLOYMENT/DEPLOYMENT SCHEDULE WOULD BE UNDULY DELAYED BUT ECHOES MUSALLEM'S CONCERN THAT PERES MAY NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE THE IDF KEEP ITS REDEPLOYMENT COMMITMENTS.

ABINGTON